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UNCLAS KATHMANDU 001694

SIPDIS

SENSITIVE

STATE FOR SA/INS  
LONDON FOR POL - RIEDEL

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SUBJECT: POLICE DISRUPT PUBLIC CELEBRATION OF TIBETAN  
DEMOCRACY DAY

1. (U) On September 2 local police halted the Tibetan community's religious celebration of Tibet's "Democracy Day" and detained Office of Tibet Representative Wangchuk Tsering and another man for several hours. The celebration, which had been originally scheduled to be held on the grounds of the Boudhanath Stupa, was ultimately allowed to resume within the confines of the monastery--but without the presence of the Office of Tibet Representative.

2. (SBU) Tsering told emboff he had applied for permission from local police to hold the "puja," or religious celebration, and had encountered no objection. On the morning of the celebration, however, he reported 30-40 police were awaiting the celebrants on the grounds of Boudhanath. He was asked to accompany police to the local station, where the ranking officer explained he had been directed by the Home Ministry to halt the proceedings and to keep Tsering at headquarters till sundown. A Tibetan man who had been handing out pamphlets on the grounds of the stupa was also detained. Tsering said he tried to persuade the local authorities that the celebration was religious, rather than political, and to remind them that the Tibetan community had marked the same occasion in previous years without interruption. He was not successful, and was forced to stay at the police station, drinking tea, making phone calls, and chatting with police, until he was released at 4:00 p.m. the same day, along with the pamphleteer.

3. (SBU) Comment: The lapse of a state of emergency August 28 lifted a ban on public assemblies. Tsering speculated pressure from the Chinese may have influenced the Home Ministry's decision to stop the public celebration--especially since it was allowed to continue inside the monastery. The Embassy will raise this apparently arbitrary suppression of the right to free assembly with the Home Ministry and other Government officials.  
MALINOWSKI